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SPOTLIGHT FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

Scouting report

It comes down to this: 48 minutes of football to decide who brags about a section championship and who gets to look ahead to next summer's two-a-days. Five upcoming matchups pit teams in that exact situation. The following is a breakdown of the games by staff reporter Brian Stensaas:



Weyzata's Mitch Underhill scored a touchdown against Eden Prairie.

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CLASS 5A, SECTION 5

No. 2 Owee (7-2) at No. 1 Weyzata (7-0)

Scouting the Owes: Burning back Sam Conner has been a nice complement on offense this season to historically pass-first Owee squad. Conner, transfer quarterback DJ Herbert and wideouts Janner Jackson and Joey Sonnenfeld are poised to give Weyzata's defense fits. "It'll be tough matching up with their receivers especially because they are tall and can jump," Weyzata coach Brad Anderson said. "You can have them covered well and they still make plays." And speaking of defense, the Owes are a stout group with three shutouts to their credit this season.

Last state berth: 1993

Scouting the Trojans: Weyzata remains the favorite in this game. The Trojans proved their mettle by winning the rock-solid Lake Conference on the strength of close victories over Minnetonka and Eden Prairie despite sitting idle the week before each game. "We showed a lot of mental fortitude," Anderson said. "We didn't flinch." Sasha Doran remains capable under center (252 yards passing, 11 TDs) but the ground attack of Aaron Roth and Mitch Underhill is where it's at. The two have combined for 1047 yards and 12 scores.

Last state berth: 2009



Hopkins quarterback Billy Gregg scored against Minneapolis Southwest.

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CLASS 4A, SECTION 5

No. 2 Becker (9-1) at No. 1 Rogers (9-0)

(Saturday at St. Cloud State)

Scouting the Bulldogs: It's been another grand season for the much-decorated Becker football program. Its lone blinks came at the hands of Rogers, though. And how: The Bulldogs allowed 51 points in that Oct. 8 tilt, the most they had sacrificed in at least six seasons. Becker has the game to make a difference, however. Veteran starting quarterback Johnny Benson has 1,426 yards passing and 22 touchdowns in his senior season. Classmate Cameron Cox adds 727 yards rushing and seven TDs to the mix.

Last state berth: 2006

Scouting the Royals Defense: Defense. Rogers did not allow a point until Princeton's Terin Lind hustled off a deapnd touchdown run in the third quarter of Week 5. The Royals allowed points — including 40 to Becker — in the next three games before earning a fifth shutout of the year last week against St. Michael-Sherburne. Eight different Royals have been in on a sack this season, while the team as a whole has recovered 13 fumbles and grabbed seven interceptions. That's helped lead to great field position, aiding Rogers' average scoring output of nearly 45 per game.

Last state berth: 2009

CLASS 3A, SECTION 2

No. 5 Lefanow-Henderson (6-4)

at No. 2 Minneapolis Washburn (7-3)

Scouting the Giants: Don't expect much passing. Lefanow-Henderson's Brandon Kneebler, Josh Wilbert and Jack Swenberg have all rushed the ball 60 or more times this season. They spend the ball well on a team that has only two touchdowns passed all season.

Last state berth: 2008

Scouting the Millers: Minneapolis pride is still alive thanks to the arm and legs of junior quarterback Kyle Hughes. He has racked up 2,023 yards of offense, scoring 26 touchdowns. He accounted for six scores (three running, three passing) in Washburn's 40-13 rout of Blue Earth last week.

Last state berth: 2007

CLASS 3A, SECTION 5

No. 2 Breck (8-2) at No. 1 Holy Family (10-0)

(Saturday at St. Cloud State)

Scouting the Mustangs: Breck's attack lands largely on quarterback Austin Lommen. The junior has thrown for 240 or more yards in all but one game, and has more than 2,800 yards and 32 touchdowns on the season. His favorite target is Steven Kietl, who has hauled in 68 catches for 1,157 yards.

Last state berth: 2003

Scouting the Fire: Coach Dave Hopkins needs to see a little more courage out of his back-up players, who surrendered two quick touchdowns and an onside kick to Providence Academy in last week's semifinals. But as far as the starters go, there is little — if anything — to worry about. "Our offense has really been very productive and disciplined," Hopkins said. "And our defense has come a long way." The Fire has been on a roll since losing last season's section championship game by two points in this undrafted season. Holy Family has scored 50 touchdowns. "Last year was a killer," said senior quarterback Jeff Soole, who had touchdown runs of 57, 67 and 15 yards in the semifinal victory over the Lions. "We're going to work to win this one."

Last state berth: 2008

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Q&A

MEGAN BAILEY
MINNETONKA
CROSS-COUNTRY

For the love of the run, friends and life

Running is part of the everyday routine for high school cross-country athletes. It has to be in order to attain state rankings and section championships.

This is certainly true for Minnetonka senior Megan Bailey. The cross-country runner is ranked fifth in the state and is this year's Class 2A Section 6 champion. She beat her running rival and friend Megan Platter from Eden Prairie by a narrow margin. Bailey's winning time to qualify her for the state meet was 16:21 (Platter finished at 16:57).

With her running shoes and a strong support system, Bailey has worked hard to improve and reach her cross-country goals.

Q How long have you been a runner?

A I started in seventh grade. I ran just in high school with Minnetonka. I joined the high school cross-country team freshman year.

Q What keeps you motivated to run from week to week?

A I love competing and racing, and also training with the team. I love my team. They keep me motivated. I want to be the best that I can be. Training for the meets and knowing what I have to do to get there keeps me motivated.

Q What is one of the harder things about cross-country?

A Probably the hardest thing is pushing yourself to see how hard you can go. You find out a lot about yourself. Overcoming the mental block and seeing that you're not tired when it gets hard in a race.

Q What aspects of running do you enjoy the most?

A I definitely love racing. And I love the friendships that I've made with other competitors and kids from other teams. Learning a lot about yourself and learning about what you can do after crossing the finish line is a treat.

Q What kind of running schedule do you keep?

A It runs three times a week. I take Saturdays off. It depends when the race is, but we'll do two hard workouts a week. Then long recovery runs. Usually Saturdays are the long runs of the week.

Q How many miles do you log in a week?

A Probably like 35 or 40. It's spread out throughout the whole week of what we do.

Q What are the hard, up-tempo workouts you do?

A We usually go to a park right by the high school. You just kind of go at race pace for about 20 minutes usually once a week.

Q What type of runner are you during meets?

A I like to go hard and kind of hold on throughout the whole race. I like to go with the leaders, and then hopefully at the end I can kick it in.

Q You beat out Megan Platter to win the section meet this year. Is there a rivalry between the two of you?

A There's definitely competitiveness between us. We're actually really good friends, too. It kind of keeps you going and that's also another motivation, staying and running with her.

Q How did it feel to win the section meet?

A It was awesome. I was just kind of one of my goals for the season to win the meet. It was nice to reach one of my goals. It's also kind of been one of my goals, to work my way up. It felt really good.

HEATHER BULLER